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- ABOUT US
- NEWS STORIES
- INTERVIEWS
- CONFERENCE
- PRESS RELEASES
- REPORTS
- ARTICLE
- DOCUMENTS
- MEDIA WATCH
- NEWS PHOTO
- CARICATURE
- POSTER
- PHOTO GALLERY
- DAILY NEWSPAPERS
- STOCK EXCHANGE
- USEFUL LINKS
- GUEST BOOK
- MAIN PAGE

Palestinian Cabinet: Any Israeli Withdrawal must be Complete, Marking the End of Occupation

RAMMALLAH, May 11, 2004 (IPC + Wafa)-- The Palestinian Cabinet emphasized that any Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip must be complete; marking the end of the occupation. Such withdrawal has to be accompanied by withdrawals from the West Bank as a step toward a full withdrawal from the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories.

The Palestinian Cabinet and National Security Council held yesterday morning a joint session at President Office in Ramallah headed by President Yasser Arafat.

Arafat briefed the cabinet on the positive political achievements that were reached in light of the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution relative to the situation of the Palestinian occupied territories as well as the communiqué issued by the Quartet, in addition to the superb Palestinian performance in the International Court of Justice at the Hague regarding the construction of the Apartheid Wall.



The session further discussed the intensified Palestinian contacts for confronting the unilateral Israeli schemes, the latest developments concerning the Arab summit, and the meetings of Palestine's Committee with non-alignment countries, as well as the tour made by the Organization of Islamic Conference to the Quartet countries.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei asserted that the Palestinian leadership is adherent to the year 2005 as a time for the establishment of the independent state of Palestine, as US President George W. Bush spelled out in his 2002 vision and as stated in the Roadmap that was put forward by the Quartet through a serious negotiating process under international supervision. President Arafat and PM Qurei made it clear that this date cannot be postponed and any change over it would mean the elimination of the Roadmap, which the Israeli Government has 14 reservations over it and thus making its implementation impossible.

In addition, the Palestinian Cabinet discussed the proposed meeting between Palestinian PM Qurei and the US National Security Advisor Condoliza Rice and the contacts made by the Palestinian leadership with the Americans.

It has also been emphasized that the contacts with the American Administration have not stopped and that the Palestinians will discuss with Conadliza Rice several issues, including the injustice of the imposed siege on the Palestinian

people and their legally elected president, the continued Israeli threats, bilateral relationship, the Roadmap and its implementation mechanism, the daily suffering of the Palestinian people due to the Israeli aggression, and the contacts with the Quartet, as well as the international community, friends and leaders at all levels.

The Palestinian Cabinet further discussed the Palestinian intra-dialogue and expressed its appreciation of Egypt's efforts in this regard, as well as confirmed that the contacts are still ongoing with all the Palestinian factions and movements, as the Palestinian cause is going through a delicate stage which requires consolidation of efforts and the internal Palestinian dialogue in order to encounter the current challenges.

The Palestinian Cabinet asserted that it will continue its efforts in consolidating and pushing the Palestinian intra-dialogue forward till achieving the desired results.

With regard to the general elections, Mr. Qurei said, "We are demanding the Quartet to set up an appropriate date for holding the elections for we are in need of elections in the nearest possible time; however we cannot set up a date as long as the occupation still exists".

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